

DRAFT Environmental Assessment

Proposed Willard Addition to the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area

March 2017



Looking from north to south across Cott lake; land proposed for purchase is south of the lake



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

**Region 2
3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula, MT 59804**

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to purchase approximately 23 acres of land in fee title from the Willard and Shoquist Family Trust. The property is in Missoula County and lies along the northern boundary of the core Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area (BCWMA), which is bordered on the north by Woodworth (county) Road (Figure 1). The core BCWMA is located northeast of Clearwater Junction, southeast of Seeley Lake, and west of Ovando, and along the border of Missoula and Powell counties.

Objectives of the Proposed Action:

- Block up the northern boundary of the BCWMA along Woodworth Road.
- Protect an important travel corridor for elk, deer, grizzly bear, wolves, and many other wildlife species.
- Protect valuable wetlands.
- Provide compatible public access and recreation.

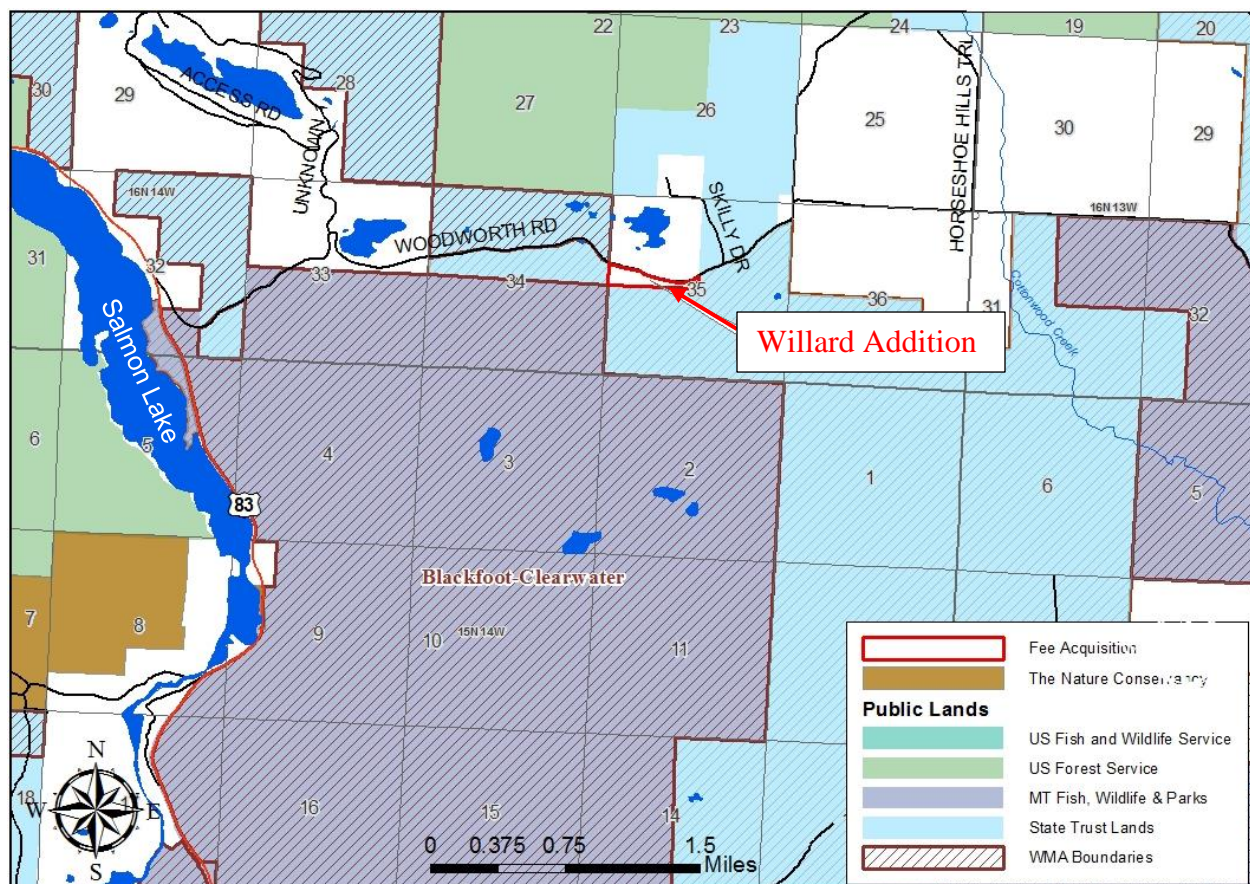


Figure 1. Location of the Willard Addition, adjacent to the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA and south of Woodworth Road.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

FWP has the authority to purchase land that is suitable for game, bird, fish or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation or protection; for public hunting, fishing, or trapping areas; and for state parks and outdoor recreation per Montana Code Annotated (MCA), § 87-1-209.

FWP has an established account to address, among other things, weed management, streambank restoration, and general operations and maintenance of FWP land (§ 87-1-242, MCA). This fund would be used for weed maintenance, fence installation or repair of existing fences, garbage removal, implementation of safety and health measures required by law to protect the public, erosion control, and erection of barriers to preserve riparian vegetation and habitat.

This land acquisition project has been under negotiation since spring 2014 and was developed into a formal proposal during summer 2015.

3. Name of the project:

Willard Addition to the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area

4. Anticipated Timeline of Events:

Public Comment Period	March to early April 2017
Decision Notice	early April 2017
Submission of Project to the FWP Commission	May or June 2017
Submission of Project to the Land Board	May or June 2017
Property Closing if Approved	June or July 2017

5. Location affected by proposed action:

The proposed Willard Addition lies south along Woodworth Road, approximately 7 miles southeast of the community of Seeley Lake in Missoula County, Montana.

Legal Description:

Township 16 North, Range 14 West, P.M.M., Missoula County, Montana.
Section 35: [a portion of the] South ¼ of Northwest 1/4

6. Project size:

Approximately 23 acres of private land adjacent to the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA.

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/ Recreation	<u>18</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>5</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

7. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

- (a) Permits:** None Required
- (b) Funding:** Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration & Montana FWP Habitat Montana Program
- (c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:** None

8. Community and Taxes

This purchase is not expected to reduce the tax revenues that Missoula County collects on this property. FWP is required by § 87-1-603, MCA, to pay “to the county in a sum equal to the amount of taxes that would be payable on county assessment of the property if it was taxable to a private citizen.” The assessed property tax for tax year 2016 was \$194.

FWP does not anticipate new impacts to neighboring properties as the proposed purchase is contiguous with the BCWMA. The surrounding neighboring lands are accustomed to the WMA, including use by the public and habitat management activities, which would also occur on this parcel.

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

The Willard Addition lies along the northern boundary of the BCWMA, bordered on the north by Woodworth Road (Figure 2). The location of the private property, surrounded by BCWMA, Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), and U.S. Forest Service land gives the parcel high value for wildlife habitat and connectivity. Wildlife management goals on the surrounding land are primarily for elk and deer winter range, and for grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and other forest carnivores. The Willard Addition sits within one of the most biologically diverse areas in the state, supporting 2 wildlife and plant Species of Concern¹ (SOC; Appendix A).

The Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA provides critical winter range for approximately 1000 elk that migrate to and from higher-elevation summer ranges in the surrounding mountains. Many of these elk migrate from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area through the Willard Addition onto the BCWMA. Mule deer and white-tailed deer use the Willard Addition and surrounding BCWMA year-round, and the area produces one of the best whitetail deer harvests in Region 2.

In addition to the importance for elk migration to the BCWMA the Willard Addition also experiences regular use by grizzly bears traveling through the area. Radio-collared research and management bears have been documented in the area and continue to use the wetlands on the Addition for forage and cover.

Multiple game, nongame, furbearing, and threatened species would benefit from the purchase of the approximately 23-acre Willard Addition. Per the Statewide Wildlife Action Plan² (SWAP), the Willard Addition is associated with two Tier 1 Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need: 1) Conifer-dominated Forest and Woodland (xeric-mesic), and 2) Wetlands.

¹ A native animal breeding in Montana that is considered to “at risk” due to declining population trends, threats to its habitats, and/or restricted distribution. The purpose of Montana's SOC listing is to highlight species in decline and encourage conservation efforts to reverse population declines and prevent the need for future listing as Threatened or Endangered Species under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

² Montana’s State Wildlife Action Plan. 2015. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, Montana 59620-0701. 441 pp. Available online (accessed 24 February 2017)
<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/conservationInAction/swap2015Plan.html>

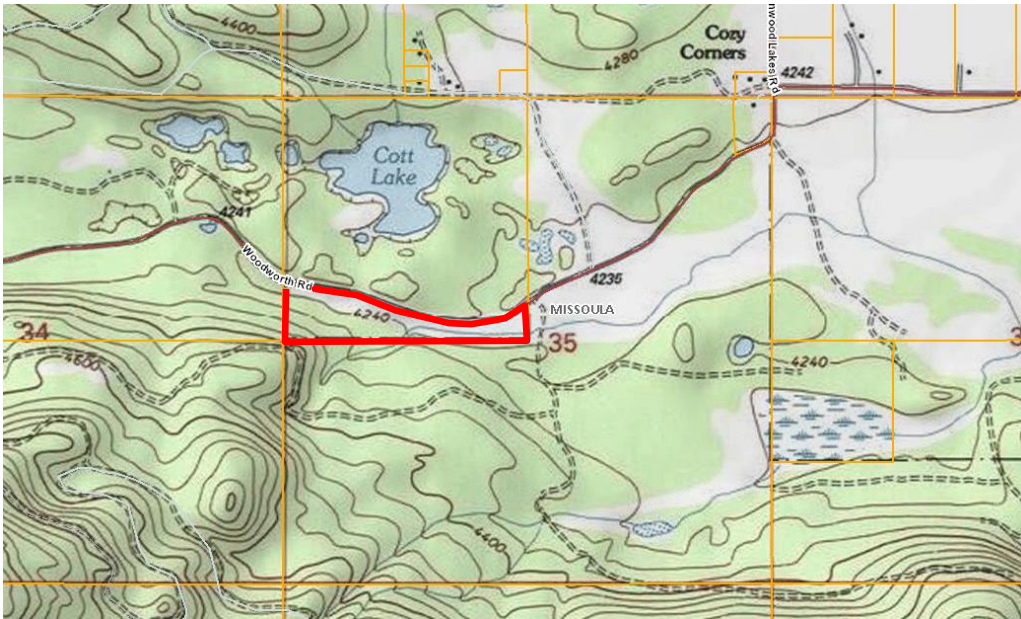


Figure 2. Location of Willard Addition (in red outline), just south of Woodward Road, approximately 2½ miles east of Salmon Lake and ½ mile southwest of Cozy Corners, Missoula County.

The purchase cost is \$200,000 and this proposal would also remove a partial inholding along the northern boundary of core BCWMA and reduce potential conflicts for the Willard and Shoquist Family Trust by creating an easily definable ownership boundary along Woodward Road.

FWP developed a Draft Management Plan (Appendix B) for the Willard Addition, to direct FWP management of the WMA and guide public use.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A – No Action:

Under the No Action Alternative, FWP would not acquire the approximately 23-acre property. If the Willard and Shoquist Family Trust retained the property or sold it to another buyer, the future impacts to resources and public access would be dependent on the desires of the property's owner(s). The property could be subject to the potential (sub)division and/or development of the land as residential or recreational housing or properties. This would increase the probability that habitat function would be compromised, as land uses would differ by owner.

Alternative B - Proposed Action:

FWP would purchase the approximately 23-acre property from the Willard and Shoquist Family Trust. If approved, the Willard Addition would be added to the existing BCWMA and block up the north boundary of the WMA along Woodward Road.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	<i>Unknown</i>	None	<i>Minor</i>	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		X				
n. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			4b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X			4e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

4a, 4b. No changes in the plant community are anticipated. However, FWP may administer a forest management project in the future that would temporarily reduce tree density and may have short-term vegetation species changes.

4e. Public use in the form of hunters and livestock (horses) may increase the spread of certain noxious weeds. An inventory of invasive weeds will be completed as part of the FWP's due-diligence process.

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)			X			5h
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

The fundamental purpose of the proposed action is to conserve wildlife habitat that is contiguous with the Blackfoot Clearwater WMA. If the parcel proposed for purchase were instead developed, there would likely be wildlife human conflicts and there would also likely be impacts to surrounding habitats, affecting the habitat integrity of the northern portion of the WMA.

5h. Grizzly bears occupy the area and have been documented to use the Willard Addition. The purchase of the Willard Addition will protect a documented travel corridor and area of regular use by grizzly bears, a threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:			X			8e

8e. Chemical and biological treatment is part of MFWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the 2008 Integrated Weed Management Plan. Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures and label instructions.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f
g. Other:		X				

10e, 10f. No revenues will be generated through the acquisition of the 23-acre Willard property. We anticipate minimal maintenance costs to the Willard Addition in the form of boundary signage.

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

The proposed action would result in a more consistent northern WMA boundary along the Woodworth Road, which would help recreationists by reducing the potential for private land trespass conflicts associated with this partial inholding.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

PART III.

1. Need for An Environmental Impact Statement

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No. Based upon the above assessment, which has identified very few minor impacts from the proposed acquisition and subsequent management of the property by FWP, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. Land Management

The Willard Addition would become part of the BCWMA and therefore management guidelines under the BCWMA Management Plan would apply. The 23-acre Willard Addition would not have any open roads (roads open to motorized travel) and would be closed seasonally from November 10 to noon on May 15, to provide big-game security. Weeds on the Willard Addition would be managed following FWP's Integrated Weed Management Plan. FWP could perform forest management activities if deemed necessary, which would require a separate environmental analysis. No grazing is anticipated on the Willard Addition. Please see the attached Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA Management Plan (Appendix B for details.

3. Public Participation

The public would be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Legal notice will be published twice each in these newspapers: *Independent Record* (Helena), *Missoulian*, and *Seeley Swan Pathfinder*.
- Public notice will be posted on FWP's webpage <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("News," then "Recent Public Notices"); the Draft EA will also be available on that webpage, along with the opportunity to submit comments online.
- Direct mailing or email notification to adjacent landowners and other interested parties (individuals, groups, agencies).

Copies of this draft EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5540; by emailing shrose@mt.gov; or by viewing FWP's Internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Public Notices," beginning March 3, 2017).

FWP will hold a public hearing in Seeley Lake on March 15 (Wednesday) at 6:00 p.m. at the Seeley Lake Community Center (east side of MT Highway 83, immediately north of the town of Seeley Lake) to discuss the proposed acquisition, answer questions, and take public comment.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope with no significant physical or human impacts and only minor impacts that can be mitigated.

4. Duration of Comment Period

The public comment period would extend for 32 days beginning March 3, 2017. Comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 3, 2017 and can be mailed to:

Region 2 FWP
Attn: Sharon Rose
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804

Or phoned to: 406-542-5540

Or emailed to: shrose@mt.gov

APPENDICES

- A. Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA Management Plan
- B. Draft Management Plan for Willard Addition to Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area

**APPENDIX A. MONTANA PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES OF CONCERN WITHIN T16N, R14W
THAT MAY OCCUR WITHIN THE WILLARD ADDITION.**

Species Group	Common Name	Scientific Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Species of Concern
Birds	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	G4	S3	SOC
Birds	Flammulated Owl	<i>Psiloscops flammeolus</i>	G4	S3B	SOC
Birds	Great Gray Owl	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Clark's Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Pacific Wren	<i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	G5	S3B	SOC
Birds	Varied Thrush	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>	G5	S3B	SOC
Birds	Cassin's Finch	<i>Haemorhous cassinii</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Birds	Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Mammals	Little Brown Myotis	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	G3	S3	SOC
Mammals	Hoary Bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Mammals	Grizzly Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>	G4	S2S3	SOC
Mammals	Fisher	<i>Martes pennanti</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Mammals	Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	G4	S3	SOC
Mammals	Canada Lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	G5	S3	SOC
Invertebrates	Gillette's Checkerspot	<i>Euphydryas gillettii</i>	G3	S2	SOC
Plant	Beck Water-marigold	<i>Bidens beckii</i>	G4G5	S2	SOC
Plant	Howell's Gumweed	<i>Grindelia howellii</i>	G3	S2/S3	SOC
Plant	Pygmy Water-lily	<i>Nymphaea leibergii</i>	G5	S1	SOC

**APPENDIX B. DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WILLARD ADDITION TO BLACKFOOT
CLEARWATER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

February 24, 2017

**DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN
PROPOSED WILLARD ADDITION TO THE
BLACKFOOT CLEARWATER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The subject land would be managed in a manner consistent with direction provided in the BCWMA comprehensive management plan (revised 1989), *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (2008), management plan for the West Slope of Boyd Mountain (856 acres purchased from Plum Creek, 1999), and management plan for the Blackfoot-Clearwater Conservation Easement with DNRC (6,850 acres, 2004).

Objectives (from BCWMA Management Plan)

I: Manage for the maximum sustainable utilization of the winter range by elk, mule deer and white-tailed deer within the following standards:

- Soil condition and development will be maintained or enhanced;
- Adverse impacts to adjacent landowners will be reduced or mitigated;
- The condition of elk and deer populations will be maintained or enhanced;
- Elk and deer populations will be supported by natural winter forage;
- Adverse impacts on other resources such as fisheries, riparian habitats, water quality, native plant communities, and other animal populations will be avoided or mitigated. Opportunities to enhance these resources will be pursued when compatible with elk and deer management (as time and funding allow).

II: Maximize public access and recreation opportunities within the following standards:

- Other WMA objectives (i.e., wildlife) will not be compromised;
- Diverse opportunities for appreciation and enjoyment by the public will be maintained. Recreation opportunities include hunting, fishing, trapping, touring, camping, picnicking, hiking, bike-riding and horseback riding.

Public Access:

The subject lands lie within the current boundaries of FWP Hunting District (HD) 282 and the BCWMA. All BCWMA lands within HD 282, including the subject lands, would continue to be closed to all public entry from November 11 through May 14 each year to minimize disturbances to wintering wildlife and prevent animals from being displaced from preferred foraging areas. All BCWMA lands would continue to be opened for public entry on May 15, subject to the following standard regulations:

- During the period when the BCWMA is open to the public (May 15-November 10), motorized vehicles may be operated on established roads that are not gated and locked, or not posted closed.
- Motorized vehicles are prohibited off established roads or on roads that are gated and locked, or posted closed. Mountain bicycles stay on established roads (allowed on closed roads, unless posted otherwise).
- Overnight camping is allowed during the period when the BCWMA is open to the public. Camps may be maintained on the BCWMA for a maximum of 16 days in any 30-day period. Motorized camping vehicles are prohibited from leaving road shoulders or established pullouts.
- Do not block roads or gates.
- No removal of firewood from the BCWMA.
- Permits required for groups of over 30 people.
- Leave no trace of campfires, hitching rails, or other litter.

Hunting District 282 requires special hunting regulations because large numbers of elk and deer begin to concentrate on the BCWMA winter range during hunting season. A synopsis of current regulations follows, which already apply to the subject lands in HD 282:

- Rifle hunting for deer or elk is allowed for B-license or permit holders only, beginning for deer B-license holders on the Saturday that occurs 8 days before the opening of the general big-game hunting season. Elk hunting is allowed by limited antlerless B-license only with the exception of one youth bull permit. Non-permit holders may accompany permitted hunters, but may not hunt deer or elk in HD 282 during the rifle season.
- Archery-only season for deer or elk closes 2 days earlier in HD 282 than in surrounding districts to correspond with the opening of the B-license only deer season for hunters with rifles. No special permit is required to hunt deer or elk in the archery-only season.
- Deer and elk hunting seasons close on November 10 each year, which corresponds with the annual winter closure of the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to all public entry. Hunting seasons for black bear and upland birds are open in HD 282 beyond Nov. 10, but access is allowed (with landowner permission) only on lands outside the WMA boundary.
- HD 282 is open to general license holders for hunting upland birds, waterfowl and black bear, beginning on the regularly scheduled opening days through November 10.
- HD 282 is closed to mountain lion hunting.

Livestock grazing:

FWP has not leased livestock grazing rights on the subject land since 1948, and has excluded livestock, choosing instead to reserve all forage production for wintering wildlife. Although FWP does allow cattle to graze selected lands within the BCWMA under cooperative management agreements with neighboring landowners, the subject land is poorly suited for livestock. There is low potential for producing palatable livestock forage on this subject forested land. Under such circumstances, livestock may compete with elk and deer for available forage. Therefore, FWP would continue to exclude livestock from the subject land.

Noxious Weed Control:

Spotted knapweed is the most obvious noxious weed on the subject land, and is distributed along the road system. Other noxious weeds are thought to be absent or occur in low densities with limited distributions on the subject land, but this is speculative in advance of a complete site inventory. FWP's program to control noxious weeds would be consistent with the approach described in the Noxious Weed Management Plan for the BCWMA (1992), and would include measures to prevent weed establishment and spread, as well as chemical and biological control of established infestations.

FWP's first priority will be to document and map all noxious weed occurrences on the subject land during the first growing season under FWP ownership. Any isolated patches of leafy spurge, Dalmatian toadflax or other early invading species will be eradicated by the most efficient and effective means (e.g., hand-pulling, digging or herbicide spot treatment), depending on weed species and site limitations. Roadsides will be inspected annually for the purpose of detecting and eradicating any new weed introductions before infestations become established. A strategy will be developed to contain and control the spread of established infestations that are identified in the initial mapping effort, which would probably involve integrated application of chemical and biological controls.

Forest Management:

The subject land is situated on a north facing aspect with mesic mixed-conifer forest characteristics. Although the BCWMA is within a fire-prone area the subject land would have historically burned infrequently and with mixed severity based on aspect and moisture conditions of the site. Therefore, forest management would be aimed at mimicking the historic fire regime of low-frequency mixed severity with an infrequent forest management approach.

Prescribed Burning:

Lightning and human-caused fires played a role in shaping wildlife habitats on the subject land historically. The probability of human-caused fire is increased by the proximity of the subject land to heavily traveled state highways, county roads, and an interior open-road network for public recreation. Prescribed understory burning may be used in conjunction with silvicultural treatments to stimulate browse production and manage fine fuels for the purpose of limiting the intensity of wildfires and retaining desirable forest structures. However, the BCWMA is an island among private lands and residences. Prescribed fire, other than the routine burning of slash piles or "jackpot burns," would require consent from potentially affected neighbors, as well as coordination with local fire management agencies. Such projects would likely occur uncommonly (e.g., 1 per 10 years), and would most likely occur in cooperation with a neighbor who might want to treat adjacent private or public lands in a similar manner.